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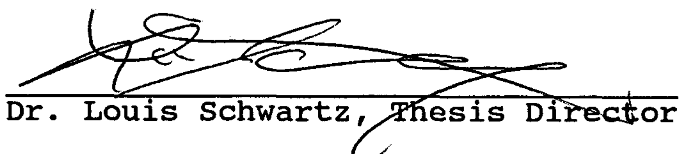
Within his poetry and prose, John Milton shows a respect for the authors of antquity while simultaneously seeking his own voice, a style that makes him different from and better than his predecessors. Milton's works contain expressions of these Renaissance characteristics: the appreciation of the Classics, the search for a more personal relationship with God, and the attempt to achieve some individuality; however, even in the smallest of literary figures such as the Orphean allusions, the need to combine a respect for the past with the ambition for a uniquely personal voice as a poet exists. The isolation of the Classical literary figure of Orpheus shows Milton's struggle to combine his respect for the past and need to be freed from its influence.

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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"This Enterprise None shall partake with me."

Milton's Conquering of his Precursors Through Orphean Allusions

By

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K.

In the late sixteenth century, England launched into the Renaissance period of her history. This period of time is most often characterized by the "rebirth" or the resurgence in scholarly interest in the past, particularly the culture of the Classical Age and the Latin and Greek works of antiquity. Paradoxically, during this renewed appreciation for the past, many Christians moved away from their past with its conformity and strict religious institutions of the Middle Ages, seeking a more personal relationship with God in Protestantism and sense of individuality. This time of tremendous change in Britain sparked great poets such as Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, who created superlative works of art and literary achievement and found fame in their lifetime and for centuries afterward. In the works of John Milton are reflections of these struggles and changes inherent in the major themes of the Renaissance period. Within his writing, Milton shows a respect for the authors of antiquity but, simultaneously, seeks his own voice, a style that would make him different from and better than his predecessors. From his audience, Milton seeks recognition of his superior talent and acknowledges this talent as a gift from his personal muse, God. Milton's works contain overt expressions of these Renaissance characteristics: the appreciation of the Classics, the search for a more personal relationship with God, and the attempt to achieve some

individuality; however, even in the smallest of literary figures, the need to combine a respect for the past with the ambition for a uniquely personal voice as a poet exists. For instance, Milton infrequently alludes to the classical figure of Orpheus throughout the whole of his works compared to his repetitive use of light and dark imagery or Christian allusions, yet the isolation of this one literary figure of Orpheus shows Milton's struggle to combine his respect for the past and need to be freed from it.

The legend of Orpheus passes down to Milton from a very complex tradition. Various sources in antiquity represent Orpheus as the combination of poet, magician, prophet, and civilizer, but he also appears as the figure of a "theologos," a person who sings and writes about the "gods and the beginnings of the world." (Mayerson, 190) For the allusions of Orpheus in Milton's works, the most important versions of the myth are found in Vergil's Fourth Georgic and Ovid's Metamorphoses. These Latin works are the most commonly referred to and most complete versions of the Orpheus myth, but it is important to remember that the myth of Orpheus is a conglomeration of many ancient sources, Greek and Roman. He is at once the widower of Eurydice and priest to Apollo in the myth, but some actual works of poetry in antiquity were attributed to this legend. Milton changes the description of the mythic Orpheus so that Orpheus eventually transcends the tragic figure in Vergil's Fourth Georgic and the egotistical poet of Ovid's Metamorphoses to become the model by which Milton encompasses his reverence for

the authors of the past and his need to struggle to surpass those previous poets' achievements.

Publius Vergilius Maro finished the Georgics in 29 b.c., over sixteen hundred years before Milton's birth. While outwardly a didactic poem on Italian farming and agriculture, the Georgics describe Vergil's deeper ideas on "the alternation between creativeness and destructiveness, gentleness and force in the world,... [and] the possibilities, positive and negative, for human civilization against the flawed backdrop of human history and the elemental violence of nature's powers." (Segal, 307) The Orpheus story is of key importance in the higher ideals Vergil is trying to convey. According to Charles Segal, Vergil uses Orpheus' tragedy to represent the "tragedy of man and the tragedy of civilization." (Segal, 311) Vergil thus concentrates on the sadness and sympathy evoked by Orpheus' twice-lost Eurydice as he relates the journey to Orpheus to Hades to beg for the return of his dead wife and is ultimately unsuccessful. Vergil emphasizes the nightingale's affinity with Orpheus, the utter despair Orpheus feels at the second loss of Eurydice, and the loneliness and hopelessness before the Bacchantes violently dismember him. Although Orpheus is closely linked with nature and the forces of good, he dies, showing (possibly) Vergil's understanding of human life's mystery and complexity. As W. S. Anderson explains, "one can be dispassionate about individual deaths if one knows that the... species lives on," or, in Orpheus' case, in spite of the sorrow and gloom, his inherent goodness and reputation as a gifted poet

live on in the permanent record of Vergil's Fourth Georgic. (Anderson, 35)

In 8 a.d., twenty years after Vergil's Georgics and exactly sixteen hundred years before the birth of Milton, Publius Ovidius Naso approaches Orpheus' story without the sensitivity that Vergil delicately relates to his audience. Ovid's Metamorphoses is an exercise in wit and creative ability in telling stories with fact, not feelings. As Brooks Otis explains, "Ovid's imitation of Vergil's Orpheus is clearly meant to amuse," unlike Vergil's painstaking efforts to evoke sympathy and emotion in his characterization of Orpheus. (Otis, 184) Vergil avoids reproducing Orpheus' words of sorrow and pleading to the gods of the Underworld for Eurydice's release, but Ovid makes unsympathetic, "tawdry rhetoric," and "trite baggage of expectable words" for his Orpheus to speak, creating a humorous contradiction between the audience's expectation for beautiful beseeching and the actual ineptness of Orpheus' begging. (Anderson, 41) In Ovid's overall structure of Metamorphoses, Orpheus needs to speak, serving as the storyteller for other metamorphic tales involving the figures of Adonis, Pygmalion, and others. Within Orpheus' own story, Ovid concentrates on the gory details. For example, he devotes fifty lines on the decapitation and dismemberment of Orpheus in contrast to the two lines Vergil uses for the same subject. Ovid also creates thorough descriptions of the tortures and of the inhabitants of the Underworld, both of which do not appear in Vergil's version. Surprisingly, Ovid finishes his violent Orpheus story with a

happy ending by describing Orpheus joining Eurydice in the Underworld; whereas, Vergil's last image of Orpheus is his head tragically floating down the Hebrus.

The allusions to the myth of Orpheus in Milton's works can be separated into three groups according to the complexity of use. In the works Of Education, the Prolusions, "Elegia Sexta," and "Ad Patrem," Milton refers to the mythic Orpheus in somewhat general terms. In "L'Allegro," "Il 'Penseroso," and Sonnet XXIII, Milton narrows his perspective and concentrates on a specific aspect of the Orpheus myth. Lastly, in "Lycidas" and Paradise Lost, Milton combines the myth of Orpheus from antiquity and the Christianized Orpheus of the Middle Ages. With the combination of the Classical and Christian elements in Paradise Lost, Milton is able to achieve his goal for surpassing the past, but shadows of this triumph begin with his general references to Orpheus in his early works.

Even though Milton draws from both Vergil's and Ovid's versions of the Orpheus myth in most of his allusions, some allusions are too common to be labeled either Vergilian or Ovidian. For example, in the prose work, Of Education, Milton's references to Orpheus are general, concerning Orpheus' reputation as a great poet which can be determined from either Ovid's or Vergil's characterization of orpheus as a poet who moves the gods of the Underworld into rescinding death for Eurydice. Milton uses his allusions to Orpheus to exemplify his position about the importance of higher and better education in the British system during his era. At the exact point of

shifting from extolling the faults of the present educational system to the elaboration of his ideas remedying the situation, Milton places a reference to Orpheus. The placement of the allusion in between the faults of an old system and the virtues of a new one is the placement of something old in the form of Orpheus to introduce something new in Milton's ideas of a better system of education. It is in miniature the same process of changing the old for the new. In these lines, Milton figuratively leads Mr. Hartlib, whom he is refuting, "to a hillside, where I [Milton] will point ye [Mr. Hartlib] out the right path of a virtuous and noble education." (Hughes, 632) This path, Milton's explanation of achieving a good education, will be so persuasive and inspiration, "that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming" than the words which will follow. (Hughes, 632) By introducing the premise that the argument which follows will be given from a hilltop, Milton allows a connection to be drawn from his next eloquent words to the ones Orpheus sang from a hilltop while "inducing the woods, the rocks, and the hearts of the wild beasts to follow him," according to Ovid in the Metamorphoses. (Morford, 284) Not only does this connection make Milton's next words seem to have the extraordinary persuasive powers of Orpheus' songs, but, in a more subtle way, Milton has insulted Hartlib by equating him with the wild beasts of Ovid's passage. This insult becomes another example of Milton using a classical reference for more than an example of what good poetry is.

In this same work, the second reference to Orpheus appears as Milton is summing up the rewards achieved by following his advise on education. Through his plan, "those poets which are now counted most hard, will be both facile and pleasant," Orpheus being the first on his list of difficult poets. (Hughes, 635) This statement on the surface praises the complexity found in Orpheus' hymns and poetry, but Milton is also stating that Orpheus can be easily understood under his rules of education, thereby, placing Orpheus on a lower level than himself. This becomes another example of Milton praising the old masters of antiquity then reducing them to something facile when compared to his own intellect. Furthermore, the poetry Milton is referring to could be "the Lithica, which is vaguely attributed to Orpheus," according to Merritt Hughes, but could also be The Hymns of Orpheus, a collection of over 80 hymns, or the Argonautica which during Roman times were "under the name of Orpheus [and] have come down to us complete." (Hughes, 635n; Guthrie, 256-7) This duality of meaning in Milton's poetry surfaces and resurfaces with his praise and condescension of Orpheus as a poet prevalent in many of the poetic allusions, whether Milton refers to the poet of Vergil's and Ovid's tradition or the author of the Hymns and Argonautica. Most often, the mythical Orpheus is referred to by Milton, not the inconclusive poet of the extant poetry.

Other references to Orpheus appear in the first, sixth, and seventh parts of the prose work Prolusions, written by Milton when he was twenty years old and still at Cambridge. Prolusions

is a collection of seven academic exercises designed to show Milton's skill in the art of rhetoric. As James Thorpe explains, the Prolusions "have to be approached with a certain wariness," when trying to determine the thoughts of Milton in the works because of the inherent nature of rhetoric. (Thorpe, 83) The first mention of Orpheus is the quoting of five lines from the Orphic "Hymn to Aurora XXVIII" in the First Prolusion:

> "In her all tribes of mortal men rejoice;
> Not one desires to fly that glorious face.
> Whene'er you shake the sweet sleep from our eyes
> Joy thrills all hearts: - the creeping things, the race
> Four-footed, birds, and all within the sea's embrace."
> (Hughes, 600 and note 25)

Milton uses these lines, which he says are words of poetic and true intent, to emphasize his point that the light is preferable to the dark for inspiration, the point being echoed in the Orphic Hymn. Milton then undercuts the beauty and majesty of the classical allusion by explaining that light is suited to practical affairs, bringing the mythical rhetoric to an ordinary, commonplace level. The second mention of Orpheus occurs in the Sixth Prolusion. In this section, according to James Thorpe, Milton "comes out from behind the art of rhetoric and... reveals his private feelings." (Thorpe, 88) In the Sixth Prolusion, Milton states:

> "And by heaven, I cannot help flattering myself a little that I am, as I think, far more fortunate than Orpheus or Amphion; for they did buy supply the trained and skillful touch to make the strings give

> forth their sweet harmony, and the exquisite music was due as much to the instrument itself as to their apt and dexterous handling of it. But if I win praise here today, it will be entirely and truly my own, and the more glorious in proportion as the creations of the intellect are superior to manual skill. Besides, Orpheus and Amphion used to attract an audience consisting only of rocks and wild beasts and trees, and if any human beings came, they were at best but rude and rustic folk; but I find the most learned men altogether engrossed in listening to my words and hanging on my lips. Lastly, those rustics and wild beasts used to follow after the stringed music which they already knew well and had often heard before; you have been drawn hither and held fast here by expectation alone."
>
> (The Complete Prose Works of John Milton, 268-9)

The passage reflects both Vergilian and Ovidian influence. Milton refers to Orpheus' extraordinary powers over nature with song which are found in Ovid's description "Carmine... tali silvas animosque ferarum/ Threicius vates et saxa sequentia ducit [*with such songs the bard of Thrace drew the trees, held beasts enthralled and constrained stones to follow him*]" and Vergil's "mulcentem tirgis et agentem carmine quercus [*charming the tigers, and making the oaks attend his strain*]." (Metamorphoses XI, 1-2; Georgic IV, 510) In this selection, Milton places himself as a poet above the level of Orpheus. According to Milton, the ancient figure of Orpheus merely plays the lyre consummately and the lyre deserves the credit for the beautiful music; whereas, Milton himself deserves all the praise since his poetry stems from his own intellect. "After differentiating between the manual achievement of Orpheus and the intellectual achievement of the rhetorician," Milton proceeds to enhance his advantage over Orpheus by claiming an

"alleged superiority of his audience," calling them learned men. (DuRocher, 65-66) By twice overcoming the achievements of Orpheus, a symbol of the past, Milton praises the old for its achievements before showing his superiority over it. The final reference to Orpheus in the Seventh Prolusion ties in Milton's thoughts with the work, Of Education, and to the mythical description of Orpheus. According to James Thorpe, "the task of defending learning [in the Seventh Prolusion] brings out the deep idealism in Milton," and thus, it "has few jokes in it." (Thorpe, 92) As Milton defends his point, he uses an allusion to Orpheus: "the very trees, and shrubs, and the entire forest tore away from their roots to run after the elegant music of Orpheus." (Hughes, 629) In the text surrounding this statement, Milton is explaining that Ignorance will not find a place with the lower animals and plants because they are aware of the beauty of Orpheus's music, and Ignorance should not find a place with humans either, a similar thought to Milton's suggestions about the reformation of education in Of Education.

"Elegia Sexta," written in 1629 to Charles Diodati, specifically refers to Orpheus twice. In this elegy, Milton is concerned with the songs and lifestyle of great poets. The power attributed to poetry and music is illustrated in the lines:

> "Nunc quoque Thressa tibi caelato barbitos auro
> Insonat arguta molliter icta manu;
> Auditurque chelys suspensa tapetia circum,
> Virgineos tremula quae regat arte pedes.

> *[the Thracian lyre [Orpheus' lyre], inlaid with gold and gently touched by a skilled hand, is sounding; and in tapestried halls you [Diodati] have the music of the harp that rules the dancing feet of maidens by its rhythmic art.]"*
>
> (37-40)

Through these lines, Milton states that music like Orpheus' does manipulate people's actions, specifically to dance in this instance. This music's power is explicit in Milton's choice of "regat" or *rules* in line 40. Later in the elegy, Milton compares the lifestyle of great bards and prophets to the lifestyle of a priest, in which, according to William Hunter, "Milton finds in the simple mode of living the secrets of the prophetic power of Tiresias, Calchas, Linus, and Orpheus" (Hunter, 40). The reference to Orpheus is directly in lines 69 and 70, "senemque/ Orpheon edomitis sola per antra feris, [*Orpheus in his old age, when he tamed the wild beasts among the lonely caves*]" (Hughes, 52). In "Elegia Sexta," the mentioning of "wild beasts among lonely caves" is specifically Vergilian, found in lines 509-510, "deserti... sub antris... mulcentem tigris." Also, this description remembers the allusion to Orpheus in Milton's <u>Prolusions</u>. Similarly, Milton introduces Orpheus' power to control the movements of people, but he shows his power to control the ancient people's language in his choice of "regat." In the second allusion, Milton combines the words of Vergil and Ovid to describe the power of poetry, thus using the two authors of antiquity to illustrate his own idea.

"Ad Patrem" is important to Milton's development as a poet and to his need to conquer the past not only for his careful

choosing of Latin words, much like the choice of "regat" in "Eligia Sexta," but also because this poem is written explaining his decision to become a poet to his father in "an open-hearted expression of gratitude from a loving son to a respected father" (Thorpe, 81). Milton calls the "poet's task" an "opus divinum" or *divine song.* (17) As illustrated through the Orpheus myth in the poems before, "Carmen amant superi, tremebundaque Tartara carmen/ Ima ciere valet, divosque ligare profundos,/ Et triplici duros Manes adamante coercet [*song has power to move the frightful depths of Tartarus and then bind the gods below and control the implacable shades with triple adamant*]." (21-23) In the allusion to Orpheus, Milton reiterates that music "without words and meaning and rhythmic eloquence" is not what he aspires to even if it has an audience in the forest choir, possibly remembering the Sixth Prolusion's description of his superior, intellectual audience. (51) He continues to state that his instrumental music is good,

> "but not Orpheus, who by his song - not by his cithara - restrained rivers and gave ears to the oaks, and by his singing stirred the ghosts of the dead to tears. That fame he owes to his song."
> (52-55)

Not only are the sentiments important in this passage, but Milton's choice of words in the Latin is extremely significant. Within these lines, Milton gives the credit solely to Orpheus for the beauty in his poetry by excluding his cithara or lyre specifically. This alters his earlier thoughtss of the lyre's importance in creating the beautiful music as stated in

Prolusions and by altering his thoughts, Milton can use the other characteristics associated with Orpheus, the man. In this manner, Milton restates Orpheus' extraordinary powers over nature and the supernatural found in both Vergil's and Ovid's works. The tears of the dead echoes an earlier poem "Il 'Penseroso" strongly. Milton achieves through these changes in his attitude toward Orpheus and in his variation of his own earlier works the ability to surpass what has come before this. Milton's higher achievements in poetry are not due to a lack of dependence on an instrument as he previously concluded in the Sixth Prolusion, but simply on greater achievements as a poet. One of the new characteristics to this Orphean allusion is Milton's recognition of the fame that Orpheus has received through and by his poetry. Milton, in the last lines of "Ad Patrem," refers to his hope for this verse to become immortal, and naturally, Milton is hoping this verse will bring fame though he does not mention fame in those last lines. The original wording of the Orpheus allusion in Latin brings a new characteristic to Orpheus that the translation neglects. "Cantus" of line 52 is in Latin a *song*, a *prophecy*, and a *magic spell*. "Carmine" repeated twice in lines 54 and 55 also has connotations of not only poetry and song but of prophecy as well. The gerund "canendo" in line 54 refers to the action of *singing*, *reciting*, and again *prophesying*. Rather than this Orpheus passage being simply about him singing a song, the specific choices of the words leads to an idea of Orpheus being magical and spiritual in a religious way by the

prognotisticative nature of the Latin. Connected together in Orpheus' art and in the legend are the characteristics of song, poetry, and prediction. The term 'song' may be the traditional "synonym for poetry and verse" in Milton's time as Langdon believes, but "carmine" in Latin already incorporates song and verse with the addition of prophesy in its connotation, as Milton used that word specifically. (Langdon, 40) Vergil uses "carmine" in line 510 of his Fourth Georgic to describe the *song* which brings the audience of oaks and tigers to listen. Ovid, more importantly, begins Book XI of his Metamorphoses with the same word "carmine," which is emphatic, poetic placement of the word in Latin verse. Milton's choices in Latin further show his ability to command the language of the authors of antiquity that he is challenging.

Milton's allusions to Orpheus are not always explicit. Some are merely the whispers of an Orphean-like theme, whispers that intrigue an intelligent audience of Milton's more for their obscureness. In Sonnet XXIII, "Methought I Saw...," Milton echoes Orpheus' loss of Eurydice in the Underworld in the last line: "I wak'd, she fled, and day brought back my night." (14) This image is a reminder of Orpheus' turning to look at Eurydice before reaching the earthly world, thus making her shadowy form slide back to Hades. The remembrance of this part of Orpheus' life brings sorrow and pity. Milton's version of losing his wife brings an even more pathetic emotion upon his audience. The myth places the fault of losing Eurydice on Orpheus who turned around, and by this action, made her return

to Hades. Milton, however, merely wakes when his wife tries to embrace him. Orpheus knows beforehand the consequences of his action, but Milton did not know his wife's apparition would leave. This loss of Milton's is all the more poignant and heart-wrenching, because Milton was unaware of the dire consequences of his action. Interestingly, Milton's description of his wife, which does not distinguish precisely whether she is his first or second wife, is similar to the descriptions of Eurydice in the ancient works because of their ambiguity and vagueness about her. According to Baker, "the wife of Orpheus is an enigmatic figure...presumed to be a Thracian nymph,...[but] there is no full identification of her in literary sources [in antiquity]" (Baker, 12). Eurydice's face seems in this way as "veil'd" as the wife's in Milton's sonnet. (10) Sonnet XXIII relates to Orpheus in ways other than the specific allusions. The sonnet, as a whole, is an example of poetry on the theme of someone lost. The subject of Sonnet XXIII is one that Orpheus might have sung to Pluto, causing the iron tears to fall, or those songs of bitter sadness that Orpheus sings after his unsuccessful attempt to gain Eurydice back, bringing on the wrath of the Bacchantes. The sonnet also indicates that the theme and inspiration of poetry is a dual one which centers on love and sorrow simultaneously like the combination of "L'Allegro" and "Il'Penseroso" and like the theme of Vergil's Fourth Georgic in which life is a struggle between opposites. In the last line of the sonnet, Milton combines the reintroduction of the past in echoing the Orphean theme through

a medium which brings both the Ovid and the Vergil tradition to light only to show his greater skill in relating these tragic emotions in such a condensed form as a sonnet. It is important to note that Milton's medium is a combination of the rhyming techniques of a Petrarchan sonnet and the three quatrains and concluding couplet of a Shakespearean sonnet. Through this medium, Milton shows his greater expertise in poetry by combining the Italian influence (Italian which is descended from Latin) and his own countryman's form.

A comparison between the poems "L'Allegro" and "Il'Penseroso," reveals a duality in Milton's description of Orpheus. In both poems, Orpheus is mentioned by name, unlike the implication found in Sonnet XXIII. In "L'Allegro," Milton indirectly achieves superiority over Orpheus by describing poetry influenced by the muse, Mirth, would both wake Orpheus from the dead and have the ability "to have quite set free / His [Orpheus'] half-regained Eurydice." (149-150) In either instance, Milton represents poetic talent as being extraordinary by its ability both to transverse the boundaries between life and death and, unlike the talent of Orpheus, able to convince a supernatural god, Pluto, to grant unconditional wishes. Through the inspiration of the muse Mirth, Milton wants to produce these accomplishments. "L'Allegro" in containing allusions to Orpheus' journey into the Elysian fields, Milton refers to Ovid who states the Elysian fields as the resting place of Orpheus and Eurydice, "per arva pirum/...hic modo coniunctis spatiantur passibus ambo [*through the blessed fields...here now side by*

side they walk]." (Metamorphoses XI, 62-64) If Milton claims that he can produce the accomplishments that Orpheus is unable to, then he is also claiming a superiority to Ovid from whom Milton took the Orphean allusion.

In the sister poem, "Il'Penseroso," the allusion to Pluto's tear comes from Ovid's version as well, but the figure of the nightingale in line 56 recalls the long simile of Orpheus to a nightingale in Vergil's Fourth Georgic:

> "qualis populea maerens philomela sub umbra
> amissos queritur fetus,...
> ...nido implumis detraxit; at illa
> flet noctem, ramoque sedens miserabile carmen
> integrat, et maestis late loca questibus implet.
> [*even as the nightingale, mourning beneath the poplar's shade, bewails the loss of her brood ... torn unfledged from the nest: but she weeps all night long, and, perched on a spray, renews her piteous strain, filling the region around with sad laments*]."
> (Georgic IV, 511-515)

Like the Ovidian reference in "L'Allegro," this Vergilian allusion serves to show Milton's poetic ability to use Vergil's work to his own personal purpose. The poem "Il'Penseroso" itself suggests not only the powe

its capability of deeper meaning, like Milton's use of allusion to show his greater skill in poetry over the authors of antiquity. According to Milton, Melancholy was able to inspire "the soul of Orpheus" to create such touching, musical poetry that it caused "Iron tears down Pluto's check, / And made Hell grant what Love did seek." (105-109) In "Il'Penseroso," poetry is able to control the emotions of the gods like Pluto, and contrary to "L'Allegro," Milton states that poetry achieves its

goal of making Hell grant Love's wish. Yet, at the same time, Milton reintroduces the conditional nature of Pluto's allowing Orpheus to take his wife as long as Orpheus does not look at her as they ascend to the surface.

Taken together, "Il'Penseroso" and "L'Allegro" describe various facets of poetry. Poetry has a persuasive power, exemplified in Milton's two poems by Orpheus's ability to extract tears and receive a chance to regain Eurydice from Pluto's underworld. Though it seems poetry has a limit to its ability since Orpheus is unsuccessful in regaining Eurydice, Milton claims in "L'Allegro" that through his poetry she could have been regained, "Such strains as would have won the ear / Of Pluto, to have quite set free / His half-regain'd Eurydice." (148-150) In this, Milton places his talent on a higher level than Orpheus', but in "Il'Penseroso," Milton leaves this boasting to stress the importance of poetry arising from the Christian spiritual self as Orpheus' songs are sung from the pagan soul:

> "Find out the peaceful hermitage,
> The hairy Gown and Mossy Cell,
> Where I may sit and rightly spell
> Of every Star that Heav'n doth shew,
> And every Herb that sips the dew;
> Till old experience to attain
> To something like prophetic strain."
> (168-174)

In this passage, Milton describes isolating himself with nature in a monk-like state. In this way, he discovers a prophetic or spiritual quality in the eremitic experience. This remembers

the alternate spiritual meanings associated with Milton's choice of "carmine" in "Ad Patrem." Also, Milton begins to attribute his inspiration to a Christian entity higher than Orpheus or Orpheus' pagan creators' beliefs. "Heav'n doth shew" Milton the way.

Poetry is described as "immortal verse" in "L'Allegro." (137) Milton maintains the idea that this poetry, stemming from either Mirth or Melancholy, has a deeper, more profound meaning than the surface poetry of the great Bards, Orpheus included. In "Il'Penseroso," Milton explains that in poetry "more is meant than meets the ear," meaning that poetry is not only pleasing to the ear but it contains deeper meanings to intrigue the mind. (120) He also describes poetry in "L'Allegro" as incredibly intricate and entwined, and also able to loosen "the hidden soul of harmony." (144) The combination of these descriptions of poetry and the allusions of Orpheus explain Milton's idea that poetry comes from a spiritual source, is stimulated by either joy or sorrow with the results of emotional moving and influencing its audience, whether mortal or immortal, and is understood by this audience on an intricate, surface level and on a hidden, thematic level. One of those hidden thematic levels is Milton's struggle to surpass his predecessors by using allusions to their works and changing the meaning to show his superiority as a poet over them.

"Lycidas," however, concentrates on the tragic end of the Orpheus story rather than the unsuccessful attempt to regain Eurydice found in "L'Allegro" and "Il'Penseroso." In 1637,

Milton composed "Lycidas," a poem which revives previous Orpheus allusions while adding Milton's strong Christian background to those allusions. The first and smallest reference to an Orphean characteristic does not appear in the lines of "Lycidas" itself, but in Milton's preliminary explanation added eight years later on the second publishing of "Lycidas." In these lines, Milton refers to his foretelling of the problems with corrupted churchmen. This remembers the prophetic tone in "Ad Patrem," making "Lycidas" Milton's own "carmen." In the lines of "Lycidas," Orpheus becomes a bridge that links the persona of poet from Edward King as Lycidas to Milton the poet to Orpheus himself through both direct and indirect allusions. Milton begins "Lycidas" by explaining that Lycidas had been a poet, who did "build a lofty rhyme." (11) Milton continues this thought by indicating that Lycidas "must not float upon his wat'ry bier / Unwept, and welter to the parching wind, / Without the meed of some melodious tear." (12-14) Not only does this passage recall Orpheus' severed head floating on the river Hebrus in the image of Lycidas floating on the water, but the tears reflect back to the "Iron tears down Pluto's cheeks" caused by Orpheus' songs in "Il'Penseroso." (107) Through this passage, Milton recreates the classical image of Orpheus and his own previous image in "Il'Penseroso" and by this has encapsulated this image in a new poem, surpassing his predecessors and his own early poetry by reintroducing it and changing it for newer purposes. Lycidas is further compared to Orpheus by the appellations for Lycidas as "Thee Shepherd, thee [mourned by] the Woods, and the

desert Caves." (39) Previously, Milton places Orpheus in "Elegia Sexta" with the lonely caves" and in "Ad Patrem" with the "forest choirs ... [and] oaks." (70) (52-3) After these initial suggestive lines, Milton follows with the direct allusion to Orpheus in the lines:

> "What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
> The Muse herself, for her enchanting son
> Whom universal nature did lament,
> When by the rout that made the hideous roar,
> His gory visage down the stream was sent,
> Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?"
> (58-63)

According to Hunter, the original passage was expanded "from four to seven lines" with the addition of the lines 61 and 63, and "Milton rewrote the Orpheus section more than any other in the poem [Lycidas]." (Hunter, 40, 181) This fact leads to the conclusion that this passage's images are crucial to the poem's structure and meaning. The lines illustrate the horrible end of Orpheus when the Bacchantes in a fury tore him to pieces, throwing his head into the Hebrus river. Milton also explains that Calliope, muse of epic poetry and Orpheus' mother, is unable to save her son from this tragic end. By this, Milton suggests that nothing can save Orpheus, nor Lycidas by comparison, nor even himself as a poet if these three poets' inspiration, whether muse or not, cannot prevent tragedy. Milton implies that Lycidas, too, is lamented by all, nature and humans, because he is, like Orpheus, a "poet-prophet, the civilizer." (Mayerson, 201) In this first section of "Lycidas," Milton has accomplished four things: the revival of the

classical figure of Orpheus in the allusion, the comparison of Orpheus' and Lycidas', remembered Milton's own previous poems, and combined these elements to suit his own purpose in equating himself, Lycidas, and Orpheus the legend.

As in the poem "Ad Patrem," Milton discusses in "Lycidas" the Fame attached to such poets as Orpheus and Lycidas. Although Milton explains that "blind Fury" with her scissors inevitably "slits the thin-spun life" of a poet, he also describes how, after the death of the poet, Fame "lives and spreads aloft" making the poet, through his praised work, immortal. (74-74, 81) The image of "blind Fury" relives again the wild Bacchantes' murdering of Orpheus in their frenzy, depicted both in Vergil's and Ovid's works. Milton places the speech on the immortality of Fame in the mouth of Phoebus or Apollo, who in Ovid's version of the myth saves Orpheus' head from a snake before placing it in Apollo's temple. This action by the god makes Orpheus' poetry immortal; and therefore, Milton's choice to use Phoebus has special meaning beyond Phoebus being the god of poetry. In line 102, Milton refers to Lycidas as the "sacred head" rather than a floating body. By doing so, Milton returns again to the image of Orpheus' head saved by Apollo. The "hideous roar of the Bacchantes is revived subsequently in the lines: "lean and flashy songs / Grate on their [the corrupt clergy's] scrannel Pipes of wretched straw." (123-4) This comparison shows that not only do Orpheus and Lycidas lose their lives tragically, but their songs and poetry are also murdered by the cacophonous strain of the Bacchantes'

screaming and the degenerate clergy's sermons, respectively, in Milton's onomatopoeic word choice.

In the last part of "Lycidas," Milton shifts from his mournful tone to one of hope in these lines:

> "Sunk through he be beneath the wat'ry floor,
> So sinks the day-star in the Ocean bed,
> And yet anon repairs his dropping head,
> And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled Ore,
> Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
> So Lycidas, sunk low, but mounted high,
> Through the dear might of him that walk'd the waves.
> (167-173)

This passage introduces the Christian element to the poem while allowing the strong undercurrent of the Orpheus legend to permeate the image. This pagan imagery of Orpheus mixes with the Christian imagery of Christ, who is "sunk low, but mounted high," having "walk'd the waves." (172-173) Orpheus, although murdered, is saved by Apollo just as Christ ascends to heaven by God's providence. While Milton combines the pagan Orpheus and Christian Christ, he does not suggest Orpheus' inspiration begins from a Christian, heavenly source. Instead, he connects Orpheus back to his mother, Calliope, the muse of epic, thus back to classical, not Christian, inspiration. <u>Paradise Lost</u>, however, proposes the need for Christian inspiration to "protect the pet against the babble and revelry of the world." (Osgood, lxxxiii) Milton, in closely identifying Orpheus with Christ as the artists of the Middle Ages did, also creates a subtle connection between Lycidas, Orpheus, and Christ as similar figures in this poem. All three figures preach goodness and

civility, die by the clamor of the masses (Lycidas' death caused figuratively by the corruption of the church clergy and thus corruption of the society), and are reborn on a higher, spiritual level. This allusion to Orpheus which lies beneath the Christian images is an almost visible reflection of Milton's need to conquer the classical authors of the past and to show a more personal connection to Christianity through the poetic use of Christian imagery for his own ambitious endeavors.

This image, describing how Lycidas will arise from his death, contains rich undercurrents evoking those final moments of the Orpheus myth in which Apollo saves Orpheus' head, making him immortal by building a temple for him to be worshipped in on Lesbos and placing his lyre in the heavens as a constellation. The sun imagery in this passage is another connection to Phoebus or Apollo, the sun god, to whom Orpheus is a priest. Later, Lycidas' sainthood, recalling the Christian images, is illustrated in line 183 in which he is called "the Genius of the shore" who will protect people on the sea from tragedy. As Milton later describes, "the dear might of him that walk'd the waves" for Lycidas, Milton returns to Christ walking on water as well. (173) Orpheus is a "genius of the shore" as well, his head having washed onto the sore of Lesbos, giving the gift of poetry to the inhabitants. Through these Orphean allusions, Lycidas reflects these three aspects of the Orpheus tradition at the least: "the attributes of Orpheus [like poet and civilizer], the legend of his death, ... and the synthesizing of

the myth with Christian and moral ideas," according to Mayerson. (Mayerson, 190)

Milton is not content to use only the allusions in "Lycidas" to overcome the past and prove himself as a great poet. In "Lycidas," Milton uses a framing technique, placing the entire elegy into the mouth of an uncouth Swain. This framing technique is not unlike the one Ovid used letting Orpheus tell other stories while Ovid told Orpheus' own in the Metamorposes. Milton, the uncouth Swain in this case, adds that he "sang ... to th'Oaks and rills." (186) Singing to nature, particularly the oak trees, is also an Orphean trait, as mentioned before in "Ad Patrem," the Fourth Georgic, and the Metamorphoses. This placement of the elegy in a frame, which contains its own Orphean allusion, serves a higher purpose for Milton. According to Harold Bloom, "in a poet's lament for his precursor [possibly Ovid or Vergil because of the allusion to Orpheus], or more frequently for another poet of his own generation [Lycidas in this instance or his younger self because of the references to his own poetry], the poet's [the mature Milton's] own deepest anxieties tend to be uncovered" (Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, 150). In this context, Milton is not only expressing his grief over the loss of Lycidas in the elegy, but he is revealing his fear of not becoming immortal like Lycidas and Orpheus through his own poetry. Finally, by placing these anxieties about Fame within a framework and setting himself as the poet creating the anxious poet of the elegy, Milton places himself above his own anxieties and overcomes

them. He breaks free of his ties to the ancient past and also to his recent past by connecting Orpheus and Christ in a different manner than the artisans of the Middle Ages.

For the basic myth of Orpheus, Vergil and Ovid were Milton's main sources' however, the characteristics of prophet and religious priest, useful on Orphic allusions in "Lycidas" and in Paradise Lost, have other sources. Antiquity views Orpheus not only as the poet who lost Eurydice, but as a religious leader and priest, associated with both Apollo, the sun and music god, and Dionysus, god of wine and song. The ancient Greek religious tradition contains a reference to Orphism, a religion supposedly based on the teachings of Orpheus, but William Guthrie remarks that there is "the ever-present difficulty of deciding whether this or that belief or practice ... is Orphic or not" (Guthrie, 9). Possibly, this inconsistency and vagueness in Orpheus' religious position is the reason why he is easily replaced with Christ in the art of the late Roman Empire and the Middle Ages. Christian artists, needing a symbol for Christ, "turned to the pictorial vocabulary of paganism" and used the figure of Orpheus because both men had "a peaceful nature, ... [the] power of composing discord through music and eloquence, and ... [their] tragic death[s] at the hands of [their] followers" in common." (Friedman, 39) Both Christ and Orpheus are monotheistic. Orpheus, upon becoming a priest for Apollo's sacred rites, is consequentially killed by the followers of his previously worshipped god, Dionysus. Apollo resurrects Orpheus by saving his head and placing the

lyre as a constellation in the heavens. Christ is also resurrected, although differently. These connections serve to enhance the undercurrents of the classical myth that Milton creates for the Christian aspect of "Lycidas." Both men were priests for their single god and easily commanded an audience with their song and/or teachings. The serpent which tempts Eve into Sin remembers the serpent which bites Eurydice in Orpheus' myth. Some very early Christian writers connect Orpheus' "descending into the lower world to rescue his dead wife, Eurydice, to the action of Christ rescuing souls from the power of death," according to Eleanor Irwin. (Irwin, 55) Orpheus, to the early artisans, personifies the Good Shepherd, Christ, and is used in frescoes in the Roman catacombs. In the Middle Ages, Orpheus is still associated with Christ, but the tragedy involving the love between Orpheus and Eurydice becomes more important, reflecting the courtly love so revered at this time. According to Friedman, "Orpheus the hero of medieval courtly romance appears to have been a well-known figure by the fourteenth century" with the 1325 romance, Sir Orfeo and Robert Henryson's poem, Orpheus and Eurydice still extant in Milton's time. (Friedman, 146) The legendary Orpheus, the Christlike Orpheus, and Orpheus the hero in romance also have in antiquity a mortal counterpart, who is the supposed author of the Orphic Hymns, mentioned in connection with Milton's Prolusions. John Friedman uniquely describes this multifaceted Orpheus as "a broken antique statue, pieced together from scattered fragments and even then forced to face posterity without an arm or nose"

(Friedman, 5). This "broken antique statue" of Orpheus is never fully reassembled by Milton, who makes use of the pieces of the legend to revere the past but also to conquer it with his own skill as a poet.

Paradise Lost ties in all of the previous allusions to Orpheus and his myth and expands on Milton's idea of the poet. As Harold Bloom suggests, "Milton's design [in Paradise Lost] is wholly definite, and its effect is to reverse literary tradition," meaning that Milton carefully uses his allusions to place himself above his precursors and, by this, he surpasses them. (Bloom, "Milton and his Precursors," 176) In his Orphean allusions, Milton not only refers back to Vergil and Ovid, but he again refers to his own previous Orphic allusions in his other works. Two passages in Paradise Lost are specific references to Orpheus and occur in the invocations to Book III and Book VII. The lines in Book III refer to Orpheus' instrument particularly in connection with Milton as a poet:

> "Thee I revisit now with bolder wing,
> Escap't the Stygian Pool, though long detain'd
> In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight
> Through utter and through middle darkness borne
> With other notes than to th' Orphean Lyre
> I sung of Chaos and Eternal Night,
> Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down
> The dark descent, and up to reascend,
> Though hard and rare ..."
> (13-21)

The image of Milton descending to Hell and reascending corresponds to Orpheus' trip to Hades to get Eurydice, as found in Vergil and Ovid, and to the resurrection of Christ, as

suggested in "Lycidas" and by the Middle Ages connection of Christ and Orpheus. Although Milton states that he is singing "other notes than to "the Orphean Lyre," he still is singing of "Eternal Night." According to Osgood, this "seems to refer to the Orphic Hymn of Night," which happens to be the "Hymn to Aurora XXVIII" quoted by Milton himself earlier in Prolusions. (Osgood, 66) The "Stygian Pool" is mentioned earlier in "L'Allegro."

The placement of these lines in Book III occur just before a distinguished list of the names of other great Bards such as: Tiresias, Homer, and Thamyris. Milton feels that he should be "equall'd with them in renown" or fame, but he continues in the invocation to want his inspiration to be from a heavenly source. He asks his muse to "Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers / Irradiate ... / that I [Milton] may see and tell / Of things invisible to mortal sight." (52-55) By asking for heavenly guidance and wanting to tell of heavenly things, Milton is similar to Orpheus who has his inspiration from the divine muse, but Orpheus sings of things that are not necessarily heavenly like the emotion, Love. By the insistence on his Christian inspiration, Milton is asserting his superiority over things which are not inspired by God like the works of the pagan authors, Vergil and Ovid, who discuss Orpheus. Milton is also separating himself from the artisans of the Middle Ages who equate Orpheus with Christ; whereas, Milton places Christ *above* Orpheus.

Book VII's passage "contains the greatest amount of meaning and specific reference in proportion to its length," compared to the other references to Orpheus in the other works by Milton. (Osgood, lxxxii) Milton tells the most important parts of Orphean myth that he previously uses in "Lycidas" and other poems in these lines:

> "But drive far off the barbarous dissonance
> Of Bacchus and his Revelers, the Race
> Of that wild Rout that tore the Thracian Bard
> In Rhodope, where Woods and Rocks had Ears
> To rapture, till the savage clamor drown'd
> Both Harp and Voice; nor could the Muse defend
> Her son. So fail not thou, who the implores:
> For thou art Heav'nly, she an empty dream."
> (32-39)

The earlier allusion in Book III contains just Orpheus' journey to Hades to get Eurydice, described by both Ovid and Vergil. Book VII's passage reliving Orpheus' death is more Vergilian, because Milton ends his story as Vergil does with the image of the head floating down the Hebrus, "tum quodue marmorea caput a cervice revulsum / gurgite cum medio portans Oeagrius Hebrus / volveret Eurydicen vox ipsa et frigida lingua, / a miseram Eurydiaen! [*even then, while Oeagrian Hebrus swept and rolled in midcurrent that head, plucked from its marble, the bare voice and death-cold tongue, with fleeting breath, called Eurydice - ah, hapless Eurydice!*]." (Georgic IV, 522-526) Ovid's story has the happy ending of the reunited couple. This passage in Book VII not only repeats the sentiments and some of the actual words in the similar passage, lines 53-63, of "Lycidas," but all four aspects: the cacophony of the frenzied Bacchantes, the

dismemberment of Orpheus, the vision of his head and lyre drifting downstream, and the helplessness of Calliope to stop the tragedy, are echoed in these eight lines. Milton, however, adds a vital part to this passage that changes his idea of Orpheus as a great poet. As Milton declares his superiority as a poet, the condenses Orpheus' death, which works as an allegory of the "death" of Milton's dependence on the traditional, classical idea of the muse as the tool for the poet. To him, Milton himself is the tool for the muse Urania, "relegated to being the power of God." (Blessington, 97) For Orpheus, Calliope is the muse of epic poetry and his mother, but, for Milton, Urania is really "the meaning, not the Name," the personification of this heavenly gift of insight. (5) Milton shows that his Urania is stronger than Orpheus' Calliope by retelling Orpheus' death which Calliope is unable to prevent and reaffirming his fate to be unlike Orpheus' tragic end.

After creating "similarities between the audience, power, and isolation" between Orpheus and himself, Milton "shatters the allusion" in lines 38 and 39: "Fail not thou [Urania}, who thee implores: / For thou are Heavn'ly, shee an empty dream." (DuRocher, 73) Milton feels his inspiration is the true inspiration; whereas, Orpheus is left with a false muse. This statement by Milton places him on a higher level as a poet than those authors of the Orpheus legend, who have already been revered in his other poems. This Book VII passage is placed at the center of Paradise Lost and signals his greatest challenge to achieve the goal of presenting the Fall of Man in a way that

will still "justify the ways of God to men," according to Book I's invocation. (26) Even though Milton asserts his superiority over Orpheus' authors through his Christian, religious connection to God, Orpheus has been referred to as a "theologos" or a person who examines the relationship between divine things and men, a position similar to Milton's in his writing of Paradise Lost. The lines 79-90 in "Elegia Sexta" foreshadow this poet and priest role in Paradise Lost, recalling the descriptions of Heaven, Hell, Satan, and the other fallen angels:

> "At tu si quid agam scitabere ...
> ...
> Paciferum canimus caelesti semine regem,
> Faustaque sacratis saecula pacta libris;
> Vagitumque Dei, et stabulantem paupere tecto
> Qui suprema suo cum patre regna colit;
> Stelliparumque polum, modulantesque aethere turmas,
> Et subito elisos ad sua fana Deos.
> Dona quidem dedimus Christi natalibus illa;
> Illa sub auroram lux mihi prima tulit.
> [*But if you will know what I am doing ... I am singing the heaven-descended King, the bringer of peace, and the blessed times promised in the sacred books - the infant cries of our God and his stabling under a mean roof who, with his Father governs the realms above. I am singing the starry sky and the hosts that sang high in air, and the gods that were suddenly destroyed in their shrines. These are my gifts for the birthday of Christ - gifts which the first light of its dawn brought to me.*]"
>
> (Hughes, 52-3)

In Paradise Lost, Milton states: "one greater Man / Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat" which parallels the "heaven-descended King ... with his Father governs the realms above," mentioned in this passage. (Book I, 4-5)

In _Paradise Lost_, Milton declares his superiority over Orpheus through his allusions, and consequentially declares his superiority over Vergil and Ovid, the poetic authors of commonly used for the traditional Orpheus myth. According to Harold Bloom, Milton uses allusion in _Paradise Lost_ as an "original defense against poetic tradition," meaning that Milton distances himself from the earlier poets and places himself on a more complex and heavenly inspired caliber. (Bloom, "Milton and his Precursors," 163) Milton proves his greater abilities over the artisans of the Middle Ages by placing Christ above Orpheus and not equating the pagan and the Christian themes. With this small, infrequent allusion to the ancient legend of Orpheus in his works, John Milton reveals this complex struggle to overcome the past and to achieve a personal voice, which will be revered by an audience long after the end of the Renaissance period in England.

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